

Hitchin Urban District Council.

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1921.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,—

The annual report this year is drawn up in a manner prescribed by the Ministry of Health.

GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area, 3,675 acres. This includes Walsworth, an area of 1,051 acres, which was added during the year.

Population (Mid-year): 13,352.

Number of inhabited houses, 2,870.

Rateable value (Hitchin and Walsworth), £68,580.

Sum represented by a penny rate, £226.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Births: Legitimate, 113 males, 116 females; illegitimate, 8 males, 6 females; total, 243; birth rate, 18.2.

Deaths: 147 (78 males, 69 females); death rate, 11.

No women died in consequence of childbirth.

Deaths of infants under one year of age per 1,000 births: Legitimate, 12; illegitimate, 2; total, 14.

Infant mortality, 57.6.

There were no deaths from measles, whooping cough or scarlet fever. There was one death from diarrhoea.

Compared with last year, the birth-rate is slightly lower, the death-rate also slightly lower, and the infant mortality rate is the same.

There was one death from cerebro spinal meningitis, ten deaths from pulmonary and five from non-pulmonary tuberculosis. With these exceptions, there were no other deaths from notifiable disease.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES

Disease.	Cases notified.	Admitted to Hospital.
Diphtheria	12	6
Scarlet fever	69	26
Enteric fever	1	—
Pneumonia	5	—
Tuberculosis—		
Pulmonary	19	—
Non-pulmonary ...	6	—
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	2	2

Cases of scarlet fever and diphtheria were taken into Hospital if they were very ill, or if for any reason they could not be properly nursed at home. They were admitted into the Hitchin Rural and Letchworth Urban Joint Hospital. The Council pays a retaining fee to this Hospital, and in addition a sum for each case. It will be remembered that much scarlet fever existed in the Summer and Autumn of the year in England generally, but in Hitchin no epidemic occurred, the cases being spread over the whole year.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

The work of this Department has been done under pressure this year owing to the amount of new work which the Surveyor has had to undertake, but in spite

of this the inspection of dairies, cowsheds, milk-shops and slaughter-houses has been made as required. The Ministry has just issued a Memorandum on the need for better inspection of slaughter-houses, but in my opinion the only way to really provide adequate oversight of this most necessary work is to have one large slaughter-house for this and the surrounding district. Whether owned publicly or not does not much matter, as long as good sanitary arrangements and constant supervision are provided.

HOUSING.

Number of new houses erected during the year, 70.

These were provided under the Council Housing Scheme. The larger scheme of the Council has now been abandoned in accordance with the policy of the Ministry of Health, and it only remains to add that new houses are still badly needed, and that until this is done very little improvement can be expected in the insanitary area of Queen-street and the other smaller areas. It is difficult to understand the indifference of public opinion in this fundamental matter.

Ten houses had defects remedied without service of formal notice.

Under Section 28 of the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919, 25 houses were dealt with by letters requiring repairs. These letters were all followed by action on the part of owners which remedied the defects.

No proceedings were taken under the Public Health Acts or under Sections 17 and 18 of the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.

Number of children examined	554
Number found unclean	116
Cases of malnutrition	32
Number with bad teeth	240
Number with enlarged tonsils and adenoids	252
Number unvaccinated	352
Number with defective eyesight	72
Number with tuberculosis	7
Number with Rickets	3
Number with other defects	143

The Health Visitor and the school teachers co-operate well in getting defective children treated, and the County Council helps to treat cases of bad teeth, tonsils and adenoids, tuberculosis and defective eyesight. The County Council also provided a school clinic for treatment of minor ailments referred there by the teachers, and the Red Cross Society has also opened a valuable orthopaedic and massage clinic. In this way much can be done to get defects remedied, and parents nearly always take advantage of these clinics. It will be seen, however, that root causes of ill-health must still prevail, and amongst these we must consider insanitary homes and over-crowded schools.

Yours faithfully,

NORMAN MACFADYEN,

Medical Officer of Health.

